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El Pacifico art and civic leaders

Meet to discuss arts funding

Public invited to take part, identify

Strategies, actions to support arts

Imagination Repertory Theatre will be the setting for a community meeting Thursday, April 29 at 6 pm in response to the crisis in arts funding for California arts organizations and schools. How are these massive cuts from virtually all traditional funding sources affecting El Pacifico residents? What is the impact on the community and local schools? What collective actions can we take to improve the situation?

Arts organizations in the El Pacifico region, artists, board members, volunteers, the PTA, teachers, business leaders, city government, elected officials, the media and the public are invited to attend this critically important meeting. The goal is to share information and discuss actions to restore public funding. Following last year's cuts, California now ranks last in the nation in public funding for the arts at 3-cents per capita per year.

Sara Smith, associate director at Imagination Rep, is spearheading the local effort. Says Smith: "We want to encourage public dialogue about how the arts improve life for our residents and our local community, and how the arts bolster the local economy, creating jobs and improving the academic performance of our kids. We need to educate and inform the arts field and the wider public about the current crisis. I'm convinced if we work together, we can make a difference."

Mark Jacob, president of the El Pacifico Chamber of Commerce and owner of Jacob Brothers Ford, points out, "The Legislature reduced public funding for the arts by 94 percent. Yes, California has a fiscal crisis, but the arts are an economic engine we can't afford to lose. For one thing, arts and tourism are this region's lifeblood. This hurts the local economy; I fear we'll lose jobs. Nobody can tell me the arts aren't vital to this community. And what about the kids in our schools? Art helps them learn and keeps them interested in school."

The California Arts Council (CAC) has a community action toolkit and information on its Web site, www.cac.ca.gov/. The CAC also has a section on its site where people can sign up to organize meetings like the one we are having April 29.

So join with us. Invite your friends and neighbors to this important meeting. The arts are a valuable asset in our community, worth fighting for. Your voice counts. Come and share your views and ideas.

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